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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 000135

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SUBJECT: LITHUANIA'S PRO-DEMOCRACY SUMMIT: AN OPPORTUNITY
FOR THE USG

Classified By: Political-Economic Officer Nancy A, Cohen

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. Lithuania intends to hold a high-profile "Summit of the Communities for Democratic Choice" May 4-5 in Vilnius. GOL conference organizers are aiming high, hoping to build momentum towards democracy among transitional countries in the former Soviet Union. They plan to convene heads of state or other high-level representatives from Ukraine, Moldova, and Bulgaria, as well as the Baltic, Caucasus, and EU countries, and claim that many have already indicated they will attend. The Government may invite Russian participants as well. The GOL hopes that the summit will nudge the European Union to be more proactive in helping the EU's neighbors to tack more assertively toward the West. The Summit provides an opportunity to promote our core objective of encouraging the spread of democracy in the region. We believe it deserves USG support, including high-level participation, which could help the GOL attract significant officials from Western Europe. End Summary.

Goal: Embracing Europe's Eastern Frontier

[1](#)2. (U) MFA Political Director Zygimantas Pavilionis told the Ambassador January 23 that Lithuania intends to convene a Summit of European leaders May 4-5 to hold a strategic policy debate on how to promote democracy in the East. Lithuania, Pavilionis said, would like the European Union to adopt a more proactive neighborhood policy. This would include more EU money and technical assistance for strategic partnerships with countries that assertively express interest in the West. The GOL sees the Summit as an opportunity to push the EU in this direction, and hopes the discussion will accelerate further EU expansion.

[1](#)3. (C) Pavilionis said that the EU has ignored the Communities for Democratic Choice (CDC) to date, except to demarche the GOL twice to chastise the President for having gotten ahead of EU policy makers by participating in last August's meeting in Ukraine that launched the organization. The PolDir confided that, until now, the CDC has been a public relations exercise without content. At the Summit, Pavilionis anticipates discussion on how to take advantage of pro-democratic inclinations in the East.

Participation: Casting a Wide Net

[1](#)4. (C) The GOL sees the conference taking on an expanded 3 3 format. For now, they anticipate attendees from the three Baltic states, the three Caucasus, EU aspirants, and EU presidency (current and future), plus neighborhood friends like Poland, the United States, and perhaps Germany. Tomas Gulbinas, head of the MFA's EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Division, claimed that EU HR Javier Solana had already informed the GOL of his intention to participate in Summit, as had the heads of state of Austria, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Caucasus countries. (We are in the process of confirming this independently with local Embassies.) The Lithuanians are wrestling with whether to include Turkey (fearing that doing so will alienate Armenia), and are also considering an invitation to Russia, to demonstrate to the Kremlin that the spread of democracy on its borders is a positive development, not a threat.

[1](#)5. (C) Lithuania hoped to interest a European partner in co-hosting the conference in order to secure the EU's imprimatur for the event, but the Europeans appear unconvinced. In Berlin January 26, the Germans were cool to Pavilionis's pitch that they co-host. (We had previously heard that Poland would co-host the event, but the GOL has since determined there is a greater need to get Western European buy-in.) In subsequent discussions in Munich February 3 with Lithuania's FM Valionis, German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier confirmed the GOG's interest and support for the conference, but said that Chancellor Merkel's schedule would not allow her to attend. Pavilionis looks for the United States to play a central role in the conference, with full participant status, to highlight the transatlantic dimension of the EU's neighborhood strategy. He also said he hopes the USG will encourage others to participate.

The Neighborhood Writ Large

16. (U) Responding to the Ambassador's questions about the structure and scope of the CDC, Pavilionis said that the May meeting will help determine that, but that the immediate need is to provide content. He could see the scope of discussions and participation to include Central Asian members of the former Soviet Union. Pavilionis was insistent, however, that the organization will not simply become a band of "Che Guevaras;" they are discussing how best to include Russia and to demonstrate that expansion of democracy is in the GOR's interest.

Comment

17. (C) Lithuania and others want to inspire the European Union toward a more activist, avowedly pro-democracy neighborhood policy. The Lithuanians understand, however, that they need help to raise EU awareness of the issue. Germany's reticence to assume a leadership role for the Summit was a disappointment, but the GOL will keep looking for a larger country in Western Europe to fill that role. They recognize that without the active engagement of the EU's larger states, the EU is unlikely to play a significant role in promoting democracy in the former Soviet Union.

18. (C) The USG can and should help. Lithuania's Neighborhood agenda tracks our own -- from providing constructive support for democratic forces in Belarus to maintaining stable relations with Russia. Our announcement of high-level participation will raise the pressure on big EU member states to match our level of representation -- which in turn will increase the chances that the Summit succeeds in encouraging democratic development on Europe's eastern flank.
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